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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUALOT/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY
RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE PRIORITY
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 5991

SEPT 14

REF STATE 46357 (NOTAL)

1. WHILE AWAITING FINAL OFFICIAL RESULTS FROM GVN AND REPORTS FROM ALL MEMBERS OF AMERICAN PROVINCIAL TEAMS SERVING AS "ELECTION COORDINATORS" IN PROVINCES, FOLLOWING IS OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS.

2. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT MAGNITUDE OF TURNOUT WAS DUE PRINCIPALLY TO OUTSTANDING EFFORT BY ALL ELEMENTS OF GVN CONCERNED WITH ELECTORAL PROCESS. THESE ELEMENTS INCLUDE MOST NOTABLY SPECIAL COMMISSARIAT FOR ADMINISTRATION, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CHIEU HOI, RVNAF, AND NATIONAL POLICE, WHICH EXHIBITED UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE OF ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION.

3. IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY TRUE THAT SOME PERSONS WHO WERE

EITHER APATHETIC ABOUT ELECTION OR FEARFUL OF VC REPRISALS VOTED BECAUSE THEY ANTICIPATED DIFFICULTIES WITH GVN AFTERWARDS IF THEY COULD NOT PRODUCE STAMPED VOTERS' CARDS. ON OTHER HAND, POINT REMAINS THAT EVEN THOSE PERSONS WHO BELIEVED THEMSELVES UNDER PRESSURE TO VOTE COULD EXERCISE FREE CHOICE WHEN THEY GOT TO VOTING BOOTHS. ELDERLY PERSONS SOMETIMES HAD TO BE GUIDED STEP-BY-STEP IN VOTING PROCESS BUT WERE NOT TOLD FOR WHOM TO VOTE, AND CONCSENSUS OF EMBASSY AND PRESS OBSERVERS IS THAT MAJORITY UNDERSTOOD VOTING PROCEDURES.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Jan Ingenberg DATE 10/6/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

4. OBSERVATIONS OF ALL OFFICIAL OBSERVERS WHO VISITED POLLING PLACES DURING VOTING AND WITNESSED COUNTING PROCESS REVEALED NO IRREGULARITIES. (THESE OBSERVATIONS COVERED DOZENS OF POLLING PLACES IN SAIGON, GIA DIN, VINH LONG, VINH BINH, BIEN HOA AND BINH DINH.) NO RPT NO REPORTS OF SIGNIFICANT IRREGULARITIES, EITHER FROM AMCONSUL HUE OR POLAD DANANG, [redacted] b-1 ec

5. VOTE-COUNTING VERGED ON CHAOTIC AT SAIGON CITY HALL AND PERHAPS AT OTHER PRINCIPAL POLLING STATIONS WHERE LARGE NUMBERS OF BALLOTS AND FIGURES WERE BEING HANDLED.

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THERE WERE, INEVITABLY, ARITHMETICAL ERRORS WHICH PRESUMABLY ARE NOW BEING RESOLVED, AND THERE ARE A FEW INSTANCES WHERE PERCENTAGE TURNOUT IS SO HIGH AS TO BE QUESTIONABLE. HOWEVER, AT MANY OF POLLING PLACES CANDIDATES OR LISTS HAD OBSERVERS PRESENT DURING VOTING AND COUNTING, AS PROVIDED FOR IN ELECTORAL LAW; THIS UNDOUBTEDLY CONSTITUTED A CHECK ON IRREGULARITIES. NUMBER OF CANDIDATES DEFEATED DESPITE BUCKING OF PROVINCE CHIEFS OR OTHER AUTHORITIES SUGGESTS THAT IF ANY PADDING TOOK PLACE IT WAS DESIGNED MORE TO BOOST TURNOUT THAN TO ELECT GIVEN CANDIDATES.

6. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO RPT NO SPOT REPORTS OF IRREGULARITIES FROM PROVINCIAL COORDINATORS, ALTHOUGH AS MENTIONED PARA 1 THEIR FINAL REPORTS HAVE JUST BEGUN TO ARRIVE. WE ARE CERTAIN ALREADY THAT INTER-PROVINCE TROOP MOVEMENTS WERE MINIMAL.

7. [redacted] WERE ASKED MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 12 TO COMMENT ON STUFFING OF BALLOT BOXES, MULTIPLE VOTING, OR OTHER IRREGULARITIES WITHIN THEIR AREAS. ONLY POSITIVE REPORTS -- AND THESE SO FAR UN- b-1 ec

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DOCUMENTED -- COME FROM II CORPS, WHERE BAN ME THUOT SAID "IT WAS REPORTED THAT IT WAS MOST LIKELY (THAT) SOME MILITARY (PERSONNEL) AND THEIR FAMILIES VOTED TWICE", WITH SECOND VOTING CARDS, IN BAN ME THUOT CITY. [redacted] NHA TRANG CITED SINGLE CENSUS-GRIEVANCE REPORT THAT [redacted] IN SOME CASES (IN NHA TRANG) MILITARY PERSONNEL VOTED EARLY IN THE DAY-

WITH THEIR FAMILIES AND LATER WERE ORDERED TO VOTE WITH THEIR UNITS". [redacted] ADDED COMMENT THAT "EXTENT OF SUCH DOUBLE BALLOTING HAS NOT BEEN DETERMINED". (SUCH HEAVY-HANDEDNESS IN II CORPS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH GEN. VINH LOC'S CLUMSY AND UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO INSERT MILITARY CANDIDATES IN SEVERAL PROVINCES AFTER OFFICIAL FILING DEADLINE.)

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8. BY CONTRAST, [redacted] IN DANANG NOTED ABSENCE ANY EVIDENCE OF BALLOT-STUFFING AND DEFEAT OF SEVERAL MILITARY CANDIDATES "IN SUPPORT OUR CONTENTION THAT RIGGING WAS NOT A FACTOR" AND COMMENTED THAT "THERE WAS REAL AND GENUINE DESIRE AMONG THE PEOPLE TO VOTE. PEOPLE DRESSED BEST CLOTHES. CITIES WERE DECKED WITH

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FLAGS. IN MANY VILLAGES VOTING TOOK ON SOCIAL ASPECT. MOST VOTERS SUFFERED INCONVENIENCE OR HARDSHIP OF SOME FORM OR OTHER, AND MANY BRAVED VC PRESSURE AND THREATS. IT WOULD BE SHAME TO HAVE THIS FACT LOST TRYING TO ANSWER RIGGING CHARGE WHICH COMMUNISTS WILL MAKE ANYWAY."

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[redacted]

10. AMERICAN JOURNALISTS WHOM WE HAVE DEBRIEFED ON THEIR ELECTION DAY EXPERIENCES [redacted] HAVE BEEN UNANIMOUS IN PRAISE OF GVN ORGANIZATION AND FAIRNESS WITH WHICH ELECTIONS CONDUCTED IN FACE OF SERIOUS VC OPPOSITION. (FOR SOME OF THESE, SUCCESS OF ELECTIONS REQUIRES EATING THEIR OWN WORDS.) NO RPT NO JOURNALIST HAS CITED, AT LEAST TO US, ANY IRREGULARITY HE WITNESSED, AND THEY WERE LOOKING FOR THIS SORT OF THING. LODGE
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NOTE: ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O 9/14/66 8:30AM
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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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SAL C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 5991
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P
NSC 11. WE DO NOT REPT NOT KNOW WHAT AREAS WERE VISITED BY
INR JAPANESE JOURNALISTS (OTHER THAN YOSITUGU YANGIHARA OF
AID MAINICHI NEWSPAPERS, WHO WAS TRAVELING IN VEHICLE BEHIND
RSR THAT OF OBERDORFER AND BINH DUONG PROVINCE CHIEF WHEN
LATTER TWO WERE SLIGHTLY INJURED BY COMMAND-DETONATED
CLAYMORE MINE) OR WHAT "EVIDENCE OF FRAUDULENT PRACTICES"
THEY CLAIM TO HAVE OBSERVED.

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WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING
FROM TOKYO SPECIFICS OF ANY ALLEGATIONS THAT MAY BE

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PUBLISHED OR REPORTED TO GOV.

12. ONLY OTHER NEGATIVE REPORT BY ON-THE-SCENE OBSERVER OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE IS ONE FILED BY NORWEGIAN BROADCASTER MUNTE KAAS TO RADIO DENMARK (COPENHAGEN'S 306, NOT SENT DEPT).

13. IN LIGHT OF FOREGOING, WE BELIEVE DEPARTMENT CAN INDICATE THAT ELECTIONS NOT ONLY ENJOYED GREATER PARTICIPATION THAN EVEN MOST OPTIMISTIC HAD EXPECTED BUT ALSO WERE EXTREMELY FAIR AND FREE. WHILE ALLEGATIONS BY LOSING CANDIDATES (NO SPECIFICS SO FAR) WILL NO DOUBT ARISE, AND WHILE SPECIFIC IRREGULARITIES MAY BE UNCOVERED AND DOCUMENTED, BURDEN OF PROOF MUST REST ON DETRACTORS OF ELECTIONS -- WHO WILL BE HARD PUT TO FIND SUCH PROOF. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SOME

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COMMENTATORS WHO DO NOT WANT TO BE CONVINCED.

14. IN RESPECT OF OVERALL VIEW OF ELECTIONS IT CAN BE SAID THAT VIET CONG WENT ALL OUT BY WORD AND DEED TO FRUSTRATE ELECTIONS. THEY FAILED DESPITE EVERYTHING THEY TRIED. THE MILITANT BUDDHISTS AND THE SPLINTER GROUPS IN THE SO-CALLED FRONT OF ALL RELIGIONS WHO CALLED FOR A BOYCOTT OF THE ELECTIONS ALSO FAILED.

15. THE GVN CONDUCTED AN AGGRESSIVE PROGRAM T GET OUT THE VOTE. THE PEOPLE WANTED TO VOTE, WERE GIVEN THE OP. RTUNITY AND THE PROTECTION NECESSARY, AND THEY CAME OUT IN LARGE NUMBERS.
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NOTE: Advance copy to S/S-O at 8:50 a.m., September 14. Passed White House, CIA, DOD, NSA, USIA at 8:50 a.m., September 14.

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